

USUN PRESS RELEASE #199  
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August 9, 2006

Statement by Jackie W. Sanders, Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs,  
at the Open Debate on Peace Consolidation in West Africa, in the Security Council,  
August 9, 2006

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Mr. President,

I warmly welcome you and the other ministers here to New York and to the United States. I join others in commending you on this useful initiative of exchanging ideas in the Council on the topic of Peace Consolidation in West Africa. I also wish to add my thanks to SRSG Ould-Abdullah and Executive Secretary Chambas for sharing their thoughts on this complicated issue.

West Africa has come a long way from the social chaos and civil war experienced throughout much of the subregion not very long ago, as others have pointed out. The positive developments in West Africa during the past few years have been remarkable. It is, for a many, many West Africans, a better and safer place.

The United States applauds the contributions made by the United Nations in West African countries including Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Liberia. UN efforts in those countries, both its carrots and sticks, have been essential to the resolution of conflict and subsequent development that have taken place. We also commend the UN's continuing efforts to support the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire and urge the Ivorian parties to take all necessary steps to move that process forward.

Many in the international community have contributed money, troops and other ways to international efforts supporting the transition to stability and democratic rule in the region. For our part, the United States will continue to support this critical work.

We have taken note, and agree with, many of the points that have been made about how to sustain this peace. We would underscore as well that now is not the time for complacency. While there have been some substantial improvements in West Africa, there is important work to be done. International support is still essential for these nations in a variety of areas, including security sector reform, governance, development, financial stability, and the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration process.

We believe that lasting stability and development in West Africa is most likely to be achieved through the link of democracy and economic freedom. International aid, of

course, is a part of the mix as is private investment. But aid works best, and investment will almost certainly follow, once freely elected governments put in place policies of good governance, transparency and rule of law. It is for this reason that we were encouraged by the commitment shown by Liberian President Sirleaf Johnson to the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program – GEMAP. We hope regional organizations, and especially ECOWAS will find more ways to promote these values.

As further incentive for good governance, President Bush proposed in 2002 the Millennium Challenge Account to serve as a concrete mechanism for linking development assistance to developing countries that rule justly, invest wisely in their people and encourage economic freedom. The growing number of countries in Africa, including West Africa, that are demonstrating their resolve to meet these conditions is heartening. Ghana is a prime example. Just last week, in a signing ceremony in Washington D.C. witnessed by President John Kufuor and Secretary of State Rice, the Millennium Challenge Corporation signed its largest grant to date, more than half a billion dollars for anti-poverty programs in Ghana.

We also believe that a commitment to human rights will help to consolidate peace. Continued efforts throughout the region to develop more democratic and professional security forces are needed. Individuals must be made accountable for their crimes. The commendable efforts of West African leaders to bring Charles Taylor to justice was an important step in this direction.

The United States will remain actively engaged in the spectrum of efforts to consolidate peace in West Africa. We are pleased with the decision of the Peacebuilding Commission to include Sierra Leone in its initial efforts. We look forward to its recommendations.